

# Seeking Safety, Equity, and Justice

## Experiences of Survivors with the Court System

### Summary

ODVN completed a statewide survey with 588 domestic violence survivors to deepen our understanding of the experiences of survivors when seeking safety and services from law enforcement, courts, and social services agencies. Here are some significant findings from survivors' experiences with the court system.

### Significant Findings

- Overall, female respondents felt that the court systems and personnel took their concerns seriously. 76% of white and Black/African American female respondents and 77% of non-Black women of color respondents felt safe in the court systems.

**62%** of respondents interacted with the court for their **most recent domestic violence incident**.

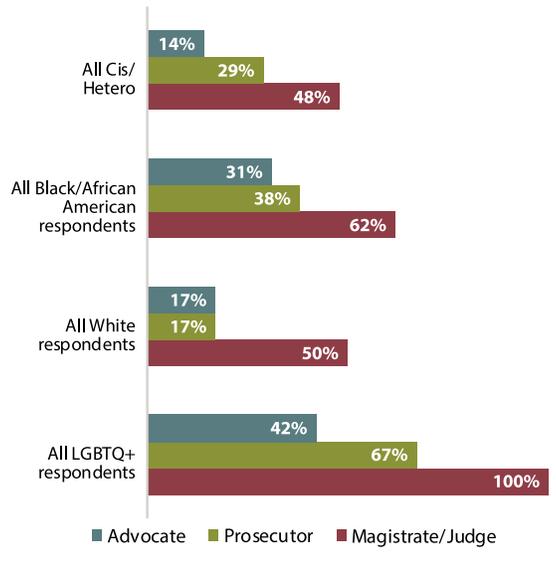
**59%** respondents said they were **criticized by judges/magistrates**.

- The vast majority (92%) of survivors who had access to an advocate found them helpful. 85% of those said that they received information from an advocate about additional legal options, and three-quarters of them (76%) received resources and support for housing, shelters, financial resources, Crime Victim Compensation information, and culturally specific resources.
- However, of respondents who had filed criminal charges, only 59% received help from an advocate at the prosecutor's office.
- 12% of respondents felt pressure from the court advocate or prosecutor to make a decision they did not feel comfortable with. Non-Black women of color reported feeling the most pressure out of the other groups.
- Among the survivors who previously had a protection order (criminal or civil), 14% said they were criticized by court personnel for seeking a protection order after the new incident. 39% said they were criticized by prosecutors.

**25%** respondents said they were **criticized by advocates**.



Magistrates/Judges were up to 2x more likely to criticize **LGBTQ+** individuals for pursuing protection orders.



- LGBTQ+ respondents reported having a court advocate 10% less often than heterosexual survivors.
- The race and gender of the court system personnel did make a difference in helping survivors feel safe, understood, supported, and helped.

## Recommendations

- **Domestic Violence Specific Training**—Ongoing training specific to domestic violence could be beneficial to court personnel.
- **Policy Review and Accountability**—Prosecution policies should ensure that when survivors want to prosecute, cases with evidence can go forward. Marsy’s Law provisions to have meaningful input and notice should be monitored to ensure the law is followed.
- **Ongoing Anti-Bias Training**—Implementing training for every system that responds to domestic violence as a core and ongoing resource could help ensure that Ohio victims perceive our justice system and social services as fair and free from bias.
- **Funding Resources**—As public defender resources for misdemeanor cases are limited, and consequences for survivors are often severe, funding prohibition on legally assisting survivors who have been arrested could be re-evaluated.